

**Testimony of
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**Appropriations Committee
March 9, 2023**

**Public Hearing on:
H.B. 6659 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING
APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

Good morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio and the members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Rick Rothstein, thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify on H.B. 6659-AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDED June 30, 2025.. I am the parent of Spencer, a 40 year old son who has intellectual disability, profound autism, and complex medical issues. Spencer's IQ is below 69. Due to his complex medical issues and behaviors in 1991, at our request, Spencer was an emergency placement and has been in a DDS licensed Community Living Arrangements operated by HARC, Inc. for the last 32 years. He has thrived in this type of setting. Our family is extremely grateful to Governor Lamont, DDS, the legislature, HARC and the community for these supports. A special thank you to our DDS case managers over the years, including Deborah Devivo who have been very helpful to us, HARC and DDS in finding solutions that work best for Spencer,

This testimony is in my individual capacity for me, his mother, and his two sisters, both younger than Spencer) and for all those with IDD who don't have a voice. Many but not all individuals with IDD cannot speak or write testimony. Many families, unfortunately, are not comfortable with speaking up to DDS or the legislature about their family's needs. I have served or am serving in leadership positions on

the Council of Developmental Services, DDS Regional Advisory Council-North Region, HARC, Inc. and CT DDS FAMILIES FIRST, INC. (a nonprofit advocacy group of only families). I am also an active participant in several national advocacy groups.

I generally support the Governor's proposed budget for DDS but I do have some concerns about important items not reflected therein.

First,, all of the segments of IDD supports (public, private and self-directed) continue to face the most severe staffing shortages in our history. Expansion of services is dependent upon a very strong workforce development effort for staff to deliver supports in whatever setting. Current support providers cannot adequately staff their existing case load. Many activities are being canceled or deferred affecting the quality of life for our most vulnerable. Seniors, such as myself, wonder what will happen when we are no longer around to lend a helping hand. There are individuals who have funding and cannot receive needed supports due to lack of staff. A big part of this compensation based, but there should be an effort to formally professionalize the work force. I support additional funding to help alleviate the staffing crisis at all levels of the provider agencies to improve recruitment and retention.

Second, the nonprofit providers, which provide 95% of support services to our community have been crushed by many years of increased expectations and inflation. In order to continue providing their current support services or considering expansion, they need to be appropriately compensated for the full true cost of supports they provide. An increase in rates on a percentage basis is most appropriate, to catch up, with provision for regular COLA increases beyond the biennium,

Finally, Connecticut continues to have a substantial waiting list for residential services. While DDS feels that the efforts undertaken with the ARPA Initiative will eventually open beds in existing congregate settings, many of those especially with higher levels of need are likely at least a year or more away from getting suitable residential assistance, If this is a funding issue, additional funds should be added to the budget so that at least those classified as emergencies promptly receive the assistance they need. As of September 30, 2022, there are 72 individuals on the emergency residential waiting list. This number changes almost daily. When will Connecticut establish policies and fund these emergencies and the residential waiting list as a priority?

As always, thank you for listening. Your dedication and hard work to develop a budget that works for all of Connecticut's residents is appreciated,.

Please feel free to contact me for more information or clarification.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Rothstein